

Name: **Cherokee Central WY-030-15N91W29c-2012, a subunit of Wild Horse Basin WYO-030-408**

FORM 1

Documentation of BLM Wilderness Inventory Findings on Record

1. Is there existing BLM wilderness inventory information on all or part of this area?

No _____ Yes X (if yes, and if more than one area is within the area, list the names of those areas):

a) Inventory Source: **BLM Rawlins FO 1979 Wilderness Inventory Hard Copy Files**_____

b) Inventory Area Name(s)/Number(s): Wild Horse Basin WYO-030-408

c) Map Name(s)/Number(s): Wild Horse Basin WYO-030-408. Hand drawn on 2006 Rawlins, WY 1:100,000 Surface Management Status map

d) BLM District (s)/Field Office(s): Rawlins Field Office

2. BLM Inventory Finds on Record:

Existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics (if more than one BLM inventory area is associated with the area, list each area and answer each question individually for each inventory area):

Mixed ownership between BLM, state, and private. Almost all federal land is leased for oil and gas. Contains many oil and gas drilling operations, and producing fields. Many miles of fence, many reservoirs, improved springs, and wells. Permanent improvements and many miles of bladed roads preclude the area from possessing wilderness qualities. Other human activity includes hunting, livestock grazing, and management activities. Several ROWs granted for oil and gas pipelines, powerlines; uranium claims in large portion of unit. Complex in vegetation and topography. Primary plant associations are sagebrush, salt brush, greasewood, and forest cover. Variable topography ranges from steep rugged hills and rims to flat/gently rolling bottomland. The 1979 unit evaluation for Wild Horse Basin WYO-030-408 concludes that the area "obviously and clearly does not have potential for wilderness."

Inventory Source:

M:\gis_workareas\Pionke\CCSM\Chris LWC Shapefile\LandWildCharc1979(1)

Area #/Name	Sufficient Size? Yes/No (acres)	Naturalness? Yes/No	Outstanding Solitude? Yes/No	Outstanding Primitive & Unconfined Recreation? Yes/No	Supplemental Values? Yes/No
Wild Horse Basin WYO- 030-408	Yes (375,000 acres)	No	No	No	No

FORM 2

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

a. Area Number/Name: **Cherokee Central WY-030-15N91W29c-2012, a subunit of Wild Horse Basin WYO-030-408** Acreage 35370.62

(1) Is the area of sufficient size?

Yes X No

Describe the boundaries of the area (roads, property lines, etc.). If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check "Yes" and describe the exception. If more than one inventory area is involved, list the acres in each and evaluate each area/sub-area separately. In completing steps (1) – (5), use additional space as necessary.

The unit is bound on the north and northeast by County Road 608 a.k.a. Wild Cow Road. The unit is bound on the northwest by a 50 foot wide pipeline disturbance with Rawlins Field Office rights-of-way numbers WYW-133334 and WYW-49443. The unit is bound on the west by Highway 789. The unit is bound on the west also by a Class 3 Light Duty Road with aggregate surface maintained by industry. The unit is bound to the southeast by BLM Road 3309 a.k.a. Wild Horse Road. The southeast boundary includes cut-out outlier units from the existence and dissolution of the Brown Cow, coalbed natural gas unit, WYW-156218X. The southeast boundary includes a cut-out for a state section and an outlier unit, created by a Rawlins Field Office right-of-way consisting of a 50 foot pipeline disturbance under WYW-21042 and WYW-166678.

See also **Cherokee Outlier WY-030-16N92W33-2012, a subunit of Wild Horse Basin WYO-030-408.**

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT CONDITIONS: The Cherokee Central area under consideration is 35370.62 acres of BLM public land. It is located within the following townships: Township 16, Range 92, Sections 23-27, and 33-36; Township 16, Range 91, Sections 29-31; Township 15, Range 92, Sections 1-3, 11-14, 16, and 23-26; Township 15, Range 91, Sections 5-9, 15-23, and 25-35; Township 14, Range 91, Sections 1-15, 17-24, 26-29, and 32-34; Township 14, Range 92, Section 1; and Township 13, Range 91, Section 4. The western and eastern borders of the Cherokee Central area are bordered by state land and private land. There is also an area of private and state land within the central portion of the unit. The topography consists, primarily, of rolling prairie, buttes, hills, and drainages created by Wild Cow Creek, Muddy Creek, and Cherokee Creek. Elevation ranges from 7,853 feet on the buttes above the drainages to 6800 feet at the bottom of the drainages. The dominant vegetation cover is Mountain Big Sagebrush on the slopes and uplands of the unit and wet meadow cover along creeks and draws. The primary land use is livestock grazing. Among range improvements, fences occur throughout the area as well as forty reservoirs. The area contains 125 gas wells. The area also contains a number of unimproved two-track trails accessible only by 4wd vehicles as described below under item 2. The primary, dispersed recreational activity in the area is hunting.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural?

Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A ☐

Description: The 180.27 miles of primitive routes (i.e., unimproved roads and two-track trails) and 2.76 miles of wilderness inventory roads (i.e., well access roads) detract from the unit's naturalness. Examples of these primitive routes and wilderness inventory roads are demonstrated in photos 1, 3, and 8-16. When hiking across the Cherokee Central Unit, the casual observer cannot escape the constant view of primitive routes. These primitive routes create noticeable linear intrusions and disturbances that interrupt the experience of any wilderness character briefly encountered in areas untrammelled by the works of man.

The area contains 125 oil and gas wells throughout the Cherokee Central Unit (see example in Photo 2). These oil and gas installations within the unit represent permanent improvements and loss of primeval character. When examining the status of the oil and gas wells, 31 of these wells are active permanent, 28 wells have expired permits, four wells are flowing, one has been cancelled or denied, 13 have been permanently abandoned, one has pumping rods, 15 wells are shut-in, two wells are shut-off, 16 are spudded, 13 wells are temporarily abandoned, and one well is waiting on approval. Despite the variation in status, these wells remain as existing installations that detract from the naturalness and are substantially noticeable to the casual observer while hiking through the unit. All wells, which are not abandoned, are managed as active wells and receive commercial vehicle traffic for periodic maintenance. This traffic would interrupt the casual observer's experience of wilderness character due to road dust plumes and the contrast between the white coloration of these vehicles moving across the tan, brown, and olive landscape. Well pads do not receive final reclamation approval until they have been plugged and abandoned. Visual contrasts created by surface disturbances, including well pad turn-arounds, soil exposure around the facilities, and a rectangular area of wheat grass, remain until final reclamation is established.

The Cherokee Central Unit also contains 38 man-made reservoirs (see unit map containing aerial photo and reservoir legend). When the casual observer encounters these man-made borrow pits and impounded reservoirs, the linear and textual contrast on the landscape attracts the attention of the observer to these modifications constructed with mechanized equipment.

The casual observer is often attracted to bodies of water while hiking. Water adds interest and diversity to the landscape. When arriving at any of the 38 reservoirs, the casual observer would notice that it is not a natural lake and that they have encountered an impounded, muddy borrow pit. The hiker seeking refreshment from clean water, would quickly notice that this "reservoir" is designed for cattle operations where the water is unfit for human consumption or swimming. The numerous range improvements, including 38 reservoirs, were constructed, primarily, for commercial grazing operations. These improvements give the casual observer a perception that they are visitors to a cattle range rather than a wilderness untrammelled by the works of man. While the presence of cattle is compatible with a natural landscape for wilderness inventory purposes, the noticeable presence of numerous grazing-related developments in this unit is not.

In sum, the cumulative impacts on naturalness including the numerous oil and gas wells, primitive routes and wilderness inventory roads, and permanent range improvements have impaired the naturalness in the Cherokee Central Unit to a level that is incompatible with the definitions of wilderness provided in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (incorporated in FLPMA 1976):

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

(3) Does the area or the remainder of the area (if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Description:

(4) Does the area or the remainder of the area (if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Description:

(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational scenic or historical value)?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Description:

Summary of Analysis

Area Name and/or Number: Cherokee Central WY-030-15N91W29c-2012

Summary

Results of analysis:

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities of solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A

Check one:

_____ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC).

__X__ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

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